E 375
.C63
Copy 2

Class E375
Book .C63
v.1-2

MR. CLAY'S SPEECH,

AT THE DINNER AT NOBLE'S INN,

Near Lexington, July 12, 1827.

1016
1253

4. *Our distinguished Guest, Henry Clay.*—The furnace of persecution may be heated seven times hotter, and seventy times more, he will come out unscathed by the fire of malignity, brighter to all and dearer to his friends; while his enemies shall sink with the dross of their own vile materials.

Mr. Clay, after the above toast had been read, addressed the company as follows:

MR. PRESIDENT, FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

I beg permission to offer my hearty thanks, and to make my respectful acknowledgments, for the affectionate reception which has been given me during my present visit to my old Congressional district, and for this hospitable and honourable testimony of your esteem and confidence. And I thank you especially for the friendly sentiments and feelings expressed in the toast which you have just done me the honour to drink. I always had the happiness of knowing that I enjoyed, in a high degree, the attachment of that portion of my fellow citizens whom I formerly represented: but I should never have been sensible of the strength and ardour of their affection, except for the extraordinary character of the times. For near two years and a half I have been assailed with a rancour and bitterness which have few examples I have found myself the particular object of concerted and concentrated abuse; and others, thrusting themselves between you and me, have dared to arraign me for treachery to your interests. But my former constituents, unaffected by the calumnies which have been so perseveringly circulated to my prejudice, have stood by me with a generous constancy and a noble magnanimity. The measure of their regard and confidence has risen with, and even surpassed, that of the malevolence, great as it is, of my personal and political foes. I thank you, gentlemen, who are a large portion of my late constituents. I thank you, and every one of them, with all my heart, for the manly support which I have uniformly received. It has cheered and consoled me, amidst all my severe trials; and may I not add that it is honourable to the generous hearts and enlightened heads who have resolved to protect the character of an old friend and a faithful servant?

The numerous manifestations of your confidence and attachment will be among the latest and most treasured recollections of my

life. They impose on me obligations which can never be weakened or cancelled. One of these obligations is, that I should embrace every fair opportunity to vindicate that character which you have so generously sustained, and to evince to you and to the world, that you have not yielded to the impulses of a blind and enthusiastic sentiment. I feel that I am, on all fit occasions, especially bound to vindicate myself to my former constituents. It was as *their* representative; it was in the fulfilment of a high trust which *they* confided to me, that I have been accused of violating the most sacred of duties, of treating their wishes with contempt, and their interests with treachery. Nor is this obligation, in my conception of its import, at all weakened by the dissolution of the relations which heretofore existed between us. I would instantly resign the place I hold in the councils of the nation, and directly appeal to the suffrages of my late constituents, as a candidate for re-election, if I did not know that my foes are of that class whom one rising from the dead cannot convince, whom nothing can silence, and who wage a war of extermination. On the issue of such an appeal, they would redouble their abuse of me and of you; for their hatred is common to us both.

They have compelled me so often to be the theme of my addresses to the people, that I should have willingly abstained on this festive occasion, from any allusion to this subject, but for a new and imposing form which the calumny against me has recently assumed. I am again put on my defence, not of any new charge nor by any new adversary; but of the old charges, clad in a new dress, and exhibited by an open and undisguised enemy. The fictitious names have been stricken from the foot of the indictment, and that of a known and substantial prosecutor has been voluntarily offered.—Undaunted by the formidable name of that prosecutor, I will avail myself, with your indulgence, of this fit opportunity of free and unreserved intercourse with you, as a large number of my late constituents, to make some observations on the past and present state of the question. When evidence shall be produced; as I have now a clear right to demand, in support of the accusation, it will be the proper time for me to take such notice of it as its nature may require.

In February, 1825, it was my duty, as the Representative of this District, to vote for some one of the three candidates for the Presidency, who were returned to the House of Representatives. It has been established, and can be further proved, that, before I left this state the preceding fall, I communicated to several gentlemen of the highest respectability, my fixed determination not to vote for General Jackson. The friends of Mr. Crawford asserted to the last, that the condition of his health was such as to enable him to administer the duties of the office. I thought otherwise, after I reached Washington City, and visited him to satisfy myself; and that that physical impediment, if there were no other objections, ought to prevent his election. Although the Delegations from four states voted for him, and his pretensions were zealously pressed to

E375
C63

the very last moment, it has been of late asserted, and I believe by some of the very persons who then warmly espoused his cause, that his incompetency was so palpable as clearly to limit the choice to two of the three returned candidates. In my view of my duty, there was no alternative but that which I embraced. That I had some objections to Mr. Adams, I am ready freely to admit, but these did not weigh a feather in comparison with the greater and insurmountable objections, long and deliberately entertained against his competitor. I take this occasion, with great satisfaction, to state; that my objections to Mr. Adams arose chiefly from apprehensions which have not been realized. I have found him at the head of the Government, able, enlightened, patient of investigation, and ever ready to receive with respect, and when approved by his judgment, to act upon the counsels of his official advisers. I add, with unmixt pleasure, that, from the commencement of the Government, with the exception of Mr. Jefferson's Administration, no Chief Magistrate has found the members of his Cabinet so united on all public measures, and so cordial and friendly in all their intercourse, private and official, as those are of the present President.

Had I voted for General Jackson, in opposition to the well known opinions, which I entertained of him, one-tenth part of the ingenuity and zeal which have been employed to excite prejudices against me, would have held me up to universal contempt; and what would have been worse, *I* should have *felt* that I really deserved it.

Before the election, an attempt was made by an abusive letter, published in the Columbian Observer, at Philadelphia, a paper which, as has since transpired, was sustained by Mr. Senator Eaton, the colleague, the friend and the biographer of General Jackson, to assail my motives, and to deter me in the exercise of my duty. This letter being avowed by Mr. George Kremer, I instantly demanded from the House of Representatives an investigation. A committee was accordingly, on the 5th day of February, 1825, appointed in the rare mode of balloting by the House, instead of by the selection of the Speaker. It was composed of some of the leading members of the body, not one of whom was my political friend in the preceding Presidential canvass. Although Mr. Kremer, in addressing the House, had declared his willingness to bring forward his proofs, and his readiness to abide the issue of the inquiry, his fears, or other counsels than his own, prevailed upon him to take refuge in a miserable subterfuge. Of all possible periods, that was the most fitting to substantiate the charge, if it was true. Every circumstance was then fresh; the witnesses all living and present; the election not yet complete; and therefore the imputed corrupt bargain not fulfilled. All these powerful considerations had no weight with the conspirators and their accessaries, and they meanly shrunk from even an attempt to prove their charge, for the best of all possible reasons—because, being false and fabricated, they could adduce no proof which was not false and fabricated.

During two years and a half, which have now intervened, a portion of the press, devoted to the cause of General Jackson, has been

teeming with the vilest calumnies against me, and the charge, under every cameleon form, has been a thousand times repeated. Up to this time, I have in vain invited investigation, and demanded evidence. None, not a particle, has been adduced.

The extraordinary ground has been taken, that the accusers were not bound to establish by proof the guilt of their designated victim. In a civilized, christian and free community, the monstrous principle has been assumed, that accusation and conviction are synonymous; and that the persons who deliberately bring forward an atrocious charge, are exempted from all obligations to substantiate it! And the pretext is, that the crime, being of a political nature, is shrouded in darkness, and incapable of being substantiated. But is there any real difference, in this respect, between political and other offences? Do not all perpetrators of crime endeavour to conceal their guilt, and to elude detection? If the accuser of a political offence is absolved from the duty of supporting his accusation, every other accuser of offence stands equally absolved. Such a principle, practically carried into society, would subvert all harmony, peace and tranquillity. None—no age, nor sex, nor profession, nor calling, would be safe against its baleful and overwhelming influence. It would amount to an universal license to universal calumny!

No one has ever contended, that the proof should be exclusively that of eye-witnesses, testifying from their senses positively and directly to the fact. Political, like all other offences, may be established by circumstantial as well as positive evidence. But I do contend, that *some* evidence, be it what it may, ought to be exhibited. If there be none, how do the accusers *know* that an offence has been perpetrated? If they do know it, let us have the *facts* on which their conviction is based. I will not even assert that, in public affairs, a citizen has not a right, freely to express his *opinions* of public men, and to speculate upon the motives of their conduct.—But if he chooses to promulgate opinions, let them be given as *opinions*. The public will correctly judge of their value and their grounds. No one has a right to put forth the positive assertion, that a political offence has been committed, unless he stands prepared to sustain, by satisfactory proof of some kind, its actual existence.

If he who exhibits a charge of a political crime is, from its very nature, disabled to establish it, how much more difficult is the condition of the accused? How can he exhibit negative proof of his innocence, if no affirmative proof of his guilt is, or can be, adduced?

It must have been a conviction that the justice of the public required a definite charge, by a responsible accuser, that has, at last, extorted from General Jackson his letter of the 6th of June, lately published. I approach that letter with great reluctance, not on my own account, for on that, I do most heartily and sincerely rejoice that it has made its appearance. But it is a reluctance, excited by the feelings of respect, which I would anxiously have cultivated towards its author. He has, however, by that letter, created such relations between us, that in any language which I may employ, in

examining its contents, I feel myself bound by no other obligations than those which belong to truth, to public decorum, and to myself.

The first consideration which must, on the perusal of the letter, force itself upon every reflecting mind, is that which arises out of the delicate posture in which General Jackson stands before the American public. He is a candidate for the Presidency, avowed and proclaimed. He has no competitor at present, and there is no probability of his having any, but one. The charges which he has allowed himself to be the organ of communicating to the very public who is to decide the question of the Presidency, though directly aimed at me, necessarily implicate his only competitor. Mr. Adams and myself are both guilty, or we are both innocent, of the imputed arrangement between us. *His* innocence is absolutely irreconcilable with *my* guilt. If General Jackson, therefore, can establish my guilt, and, by inference, or by insinuation, that of his sole rival, he will have removed a great obstacle to the consummation of the object of his ambition. And if he can, at the same time, make out his own purity of conduct, and impress the American people with a belief that his purity and integrity alone prevented his success before the House of Representatives, his claims will become absolutely irresistible. Were there ever more powerful motives to propagate—was there ever greater interest, at all hazards, to prove the truth of charges?

I state the case, I hope, fairly; I mean to state it fairly and fearlessly. If the position be one which exposes General Jackson to unfavourable suspicions, it must be borne in mind that he has voluntarily taken it, and he must abide the consequences. I am acting on the defensive, and it is he who assails me, and who has called forth, by the eternal laws of self-protection, the right to use all legitimate means of self-defence.

General Jackson has shown, in his letter, that he is not exempt from the influence of that bias towards one's own interests, which is unfortunately the too common lot of human nature. It is *his* interest to make out that he is a person of spotless innocence, and of unsullied integrity; and to establish, by direct charge, or by necessary inference, the want of those qualities in his rival. Accordingly, we find throughout the letter, a laboured attempt to set forth his own immaculate purity in striking contrast with the corruption which is attributed to others. We would imagine from his letter, that he very seldom touchers a newspaper. The Telegraph is mailed regularly for him at Washington, but it arrives at the Hermitage very irregularly. He would have the public to infer, that the Postmaster at Nashville, whose appointment happened not to be upon his recommendation, obstructed his reception of it. In consequence of his not receiving the Telegraph, he had not on the 6th June, 1827, seen Carter Beverley's famous Fayetteville letter, dated the 8th of the preceding March, published in numerous gazettes, and published, I have very little doubt, although I have not the means of ascertaining the fact, in the gazettes of Nashville. I will not say, contrary to General Jackson's assertion, that he had never read that

letter, when he wrote that of the 6th of June, but I must think that it is very strange that he should not have seen it; and that I doubt whether there is another man of any political eminence in the United States who has not read it. There is a remarkable coincidence between General Jackson and certain editors who espouse his interest, in relation to Mr. Beverley's letter. They very early took the ground in respect to it, that I ought, under my *own signature*, to come out and deny the statements. And General Jackson now says, in his letter of the 6th of June, that he "always intended, should Mr. Clay come out over his own name, and deny having any knowledge of the communication made by his friends to my friends and to me, that I would give him the name of the gentleman through whom that communication came."

The distinguished member of Congress, who bore the alleged overture, according to General Jackson, presented himself with diplomatic circumspection, lest he should wound the very great sensibility of the General. He avers that the communication was intended with the most friendly motives, "that he came as a friend," and that he hoped, however it might be received, there would be no alteration in the friendly feelings between them. The General graciously condescends to receive the communication, and, in consideration of the high standing of the distinguished member, and of his having always been a professed friend, he is promised impunity, and assured that there shall be no change of amicable ties. After all these necessary preliminaries are arranged between the high negotiating powers, the envoy proceeds, "He had been informed by the "friends of Mr. Clay, that the friends of Mr. Adams had made "overtures to them, saying, if Mr. Clay and his friends would "unite in aid of the election of Mr. Adams, Mr. Clay should be Se-"cretary of State; that the friends of Adams were urging, as "a reason to induce the friends of Mr. Clay to accede to their pro-"position, that if I was elected President, Mr. Adams would be con-"tinued Secretary of State, (inuendo, there would be no room for "Kentucky.") [Is this General Jackson's inuendo, or that of the distinguished member of Congress!] "That the friends of Mr. "Clay stated the West does not want to separate from the West, "and if I would say, or permit any of my confidential friends to say "that, in case I was elected President, Mr. Adams should not be con-"tinued Secretary of State, by a complete union of Mr. Clay and "his friends, they would put an end to the Presidential contest in "one hour; and he was of opinion it was right to fight such in-"triguers with their own weapons." To which the General states himself to have replied in substance, "That in politics, as "in every thing else, my guide was principle, and, contrary to the "expressed and unbiassed will of the people or their constituted "agents, I never would step into the Presidential chair; and re-"quested him to say to Mr. Clay and his friends, (for I did *suppose* "he had come from Mr. Clay, *although he used the terms Mr. Clay's* "*friends*,) that before I would reach the Presidential chair by such "means of bargain and corruption, I would see the earth open and

" swallow both Mr. Clay and his friends, and myself with them." Now all these professions are very fine, and display admirable purity. But its sublimity would be somewhat more impressive, if some person other than General Jackson had proclaimed it. He would go into the Presidential chair, but never, no! never contrary to " the expressed and unbiassed will of the people, or their constitu- " ted agents;" two modes of arriving at it the more reasonable, as there happens to be no other constitutional way. He would " see " the earth open and swallow both Mr. Clay and his friends and my- " self," before he would reach the Presidential chair by " such " means of bargain and corruption." I hope General Jackson did not intend that the whole human race should be also swallowed up, on the contingency he has stated, nor that they were to guaranty that he has an absolute repugnance to the employment of any exceptionable means to secure his elevation to the Presidency. If he had rendered the distinguished member of Congress a little more distinguished, by instantly ordering him from his presence, and by forthwith denouncing him and the infamous proposition which he bore to the American public, we should be a little better prepared to admit the claims to untarnished integrity, which the General so modestly puts forward. But, according to his own account, a corrupt and scandalous proposal is made to him; the person who conveyed it, advises him to accept it, and yet that person still retains the friendship of General Jackson, who is so tender of his character that his name is carefully concealed and reserved to be hereafter brought forward as a witness! A man, who, if he be a member of the House of Representatives, is doubly infamous—infamous for the advice which he gave, and infamous for his willingness to connive at the corruption of the body of which he was a sworn member—is the credible witness by whom General Jackson stands ready to establish the corruption of men whose characters were never questioned.

Of all the properties which belong to honourable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character. General Jackson cannot be insensible to its value, for he appears to be most anxious to set forth the loftiness and purity of his own. How has he treated mine? During the dispensation of the hospitalities of the Hermitage, in the midst of a mixed company, composed of individuals from various States, he permits himself to make certain statements respecting my friends and me, which, if true, would forever dishonour and degrade us. The words are hardly passed from his mouth, before they are committed to paper by one of his guests, and transmitted in the form of a letter to another State, where they are published in a newspaper, and thence circulated throughout the Union. And now he pretends that these statements were made, " without any calculation that they were to be thrown into the " public journals." Does he reprove the indiscretion of the guest who had violated the sanctity of a conversation at the hospitable board? Far from it. The public is incredulous. It cannot believe that General Jackson would be so wanting in delicacy and decorum. The guest appeals to him for the confirmation of the pub-

lished statements; and the General promptly addresses a letter to him, in which "he most unequivocally confirms (says Mr. Carter "Beverley,) all I have said regarding the overture made to him "pending the last Presidential election before Congress; and he "*asserts a great deal more than he ever told me.*" I should be glad to know if all the versions of the tale have now made their appearance, and whether General Jackson will allege that he did not "calculate" upon the publication of his letter of the 6th of June.

The General states, that the unknown envoy used the terms "Mr. "Clay's friends," to the exclusion, therefore, of myself, but he nevertheless inferred that he had come from me. Now, why did he draw this inference contrary to the import of the statement which he received? Does not this disposition to deduce conclusions unfavourable to me, manifest the spirit which actuates him? And does not General Jackson exhibit throughout his letter a desire to give a colouring to the statement of his friend, the distinguished member of Congress, higher than they would justify? No one should ever resort to implication but from necessity. Why did he not ascertain from the envoy if he had come from me? Was any thing more natural than that General Jackson should ascertain the persons who had deputed the envoy? If his shocked sensibility and indignant virtue and patriotism would not allow him to inquire into particulars, ought he to have hazarded the assertion, that I was privy to the proposal, without assuring himself of the fact? Could he not, after rejecting the proposal, continuing as he did, on friendly terms with the organ of it, have satisfied himself if I were consusant of it? If he had not time, then, might he not have ascertained the fact from his friend or from me, during the intervening two and a half years? The compunctions of his own conscience, for a moment, appear to have visited him towards the conclusion of his letter, for he there does say, "that in the supposition stated, *I may* have done "injustice to Mr. Clay; if so, the gentleman informing me can ex- "plain." No good or honourable man will do another voluntarily any injustice. It was not necessary that General Jackson should have done me any. And he cannot acquit himself of the rashness and iniquity of his conduct towards me by referring, at this late day, to a person, whose name is withheld from the public. This compendious mode of administering justice, by first hanging and then trying a man, however justifiable it may be, according to the precepts of the Jackson code, is sanctioned by no respectable system of jurisprudence.

It is stated in the letter of the 6th of June, that the overture was made *early* in January; and that the second day after the communication, it "was announced in the newspapers, that Mr. Clay had "come out openly and avowedly in favour of Mr. Adams." The object of this statement is obvious. It is to insinuate that the proposal which was rejected with disdain by General Jackson, was accepted with promptitude by Mr. Adams. This renders the fact as to the time of the alleged annunciation very important. It is to be regretted that General Jackson had not been a little more precise.

It was *early* in January that the overture was made, and the *second day* after, the announciation of my intention took place. Now, I will not assert that there may not have been some speculations in the newspapers about that time, (although I do not believe that there were even any *speculations* so early,) as to the probable vote which I should give; but I should be glad to see any newspaper which, the second day after early in January, asserted in its columns, that I had come out "openly and avowedly in favour of Mr. Adams." I challenge the production of such a paper. I do not believe that my intention so to vote for Mr. Adams was announced in the newspapers openly and avowedly during the whole month of January, or at any rate until late in the month. The only *avowal* of my intention to vote for him, which was publicly made in the newspapers prior to the election, is contained in my letter to Judge Brooks, which is dated the 28th January. It was first published in the Enquirer at Richmond, some time in the ensuing month. I go further; I do not believe that any newspaper at Washington can be produced, announcing, before the latter part of January, the fact, whether upon my avowal or not, of my intention to vote for Mr. Adams. General Jackson's memory must deceive him. He must have confounded events and circumstances. His friend, Mr. George Kremer, in his letter to the Columbian Observer, bearing date the 25th January, has, according to my recollection of the public prints, a claim to the merit of being the first, or among the first, to announce to the public my intended vote. That letter was first published at Philadelphia, and returned in the Columbian Observer to Washington City on the 31st January. How long before its date that letter was written for Mr. Kremer, does not appear. Whether there be any connexion between the communication made by the distinguished member of Congress, and that letter, perhaps General Jackson can explain.

At the end of more than two years after a corrupt overture is made to Gen. Jackson, he now, for the first time, openly proclaims it. It is true, as I have ascertained since the publication of Mr. Beverley's Fayetteville letter, the General has been for a long time secretly circulating the charge. Immediately on the appearance at Washington of that letter in the public prints, the Editor of the Telegraph asserted, in his paper, that General Jackson had communicated the overture to him about the period of the election, not as he now states, but according to Mr. Beverley's version of the tale. Since I left Washington on the 10th of last month I have understood that General Jackson has made a similar communication to several other persons, at different and distant points. Why has the overture been thus clandestinely circulated? Was it that through the medium of the Telegraph, the leading paper supporting the interest of General Jackson, and through his other depositories, the belief of the charge should be daily and gradually infused into the public mind, and thus contribute to the support of his cause? The zeal and industry with which it has been propagated, the daily columns of certain newspapers can testify. Finding the public still unconvinced, has the General found it to be necessary to come out

in proper person through the thin veil of Mr Carter Beverley's agency ?

When the alleged overture was made, the election remained undecided. Why did not General Jackson then hold up to universal scorn and indignation the infamous bearer of the proposal, and those who dared to insult his honour, and tamper with his integrity ? If he had at that time denounced all the infamous parties concerned, demanded an inquiry in the House of Representatives, and established, by satisfactory proof, the truth of his accusation, there might, and probably would have been, a different result to the election. Why, when at my instance, a committee was on the 5th day of February, 1825, (only four days before the election) appointed to investigate the charges of Mr. Kremer, did not General Jackson present himself and establish their truth ? Why, on the 7th of that month, two days before the election, when the committee reported that Mr. Kremer declined to come forward, and that if *they knew* of any reason for such investigation, they would have asked to be clothed with the proper power, but not having themselves any such knowledge, they have felt it to be their duty only to lay before the House the communication which they have received ;"—why did not General Jackson authorize a motion to recommit the report, and manfully come forward with all his information ? The Congress of the Nation is in session. An important election has devolved on it. All eyes are turned towards Washington. The result is awaited with intense anxiety and breathless expectation. A corrupt proposition, affecting the election, is made to one of the candidates. He receives it. is advised to accept it, deliberates, decides upon it. A committee is in session to investigate the very charge. The candidate, notwithstanding, remains profoundly silent, and after the lapse of more than two years, when the period of another election is rapidly approaching, in which he is the only competitor for the office, for the first time, announces it to the American public! They must have more than an ordinary share of credulity, who do not believe that General Jackson labours under some extraordinary delusion.

It is possible that he may urge, by way of excuse for what must be deemed his culpable concealment of meditated corruption, that he did not like to volunteer as a witness before the committee, or to transmit to it the name of his friend, the distinguished Member of the House of Representatives, although it is not very easy to discern any just reason for this volunteering now, which would not have applied with more force at that time. But what apology can be made for his failure to discharge his sacred duty as an American Senator ? More than two months after the alleged overture, my nomination to the office which I now hold, was made to the Senate of the United States, of which General Jackson was then a sworn member. On that nomination, he had to deliberate and act in the most solemn manner. If I were privy to a corrupt proposal to General Jackson, touching the recent election ; if I had entered into a corrupt bargain with Mr. Adams to secure his elevation, I was

unworthy the office to which I was nominated, and it was the duty of General Jackson, if he really possessed the information which he now puts forward, to have moved the Senate to appoint a committee of enquiry, and by establishing my guilt, to have preserved the National Councils from an abominable contamination. As the conspiracy of George Kremer & Co. had a short time before, meanly shrunk from appearing before the committee of the House of Representatives, to make good their charges, I requested a Senator of the United States, when my nomination should be taken up, to ask of the Senate the appointment of a committee of enquiry, unless it should appear to him to be altogether unnecesary. One of our own Senators was compelled, by the urgency of his private business, to leave Washington before my nomination was disposed of, and as I had but little confidence in the fidelity of the professed friendship of the other, I was constrained to present my application to a Senator from another state. I was afterwards informed, that when it was acted upon, General Jackson and every other Senator present, was silent as to the imputations now made, no one presuming to question my honour or integrity. How can General Jackson justify it to his conscience or to his country, this palpable breach of his public duty? It is in vain to say that he gave a silent negative vote. *He* was in possession of information which, if true, must have occasioned the rejection of my nomination. It does not appear that any other Senator possessed the same information. Investigation was alike due to the purity of the National Councils, to me, and, as an act of strict justice, to all the other parties implicated. It is impossible for him to escape from the dilemma that he has been faithless, as a Senator of the United States, or has lent himself to the circulation of an atrocious calumny.

After the election, General Jackson was among the first who eagerly pressed his congratulations upon his successful rival. If Mr. Adams had been guilty of the employment of impure means to effect his election, General Jackson ought to have disdained to sully his own hands by touching those of his corrupt competitor.

On the 10th of February, 1825, the very next day after the election, General Jackson was invited to a public dinner at Washington, by some of his friends. He expressed to them his wish that he might be excused from accepting the invitation, because, alluding to the recent election, he said "any evidence of kindness and regard, "such as you propose, might, by many, be viewed as conveying "with it EXCEPTION, murmuring, and feelings of complaint, which "I sincerely hope belong to none of my friends." More than one month after the corrupt proposal is pretended to have been received, and after, according to the insinuation of General Jackson, a corrupt arrangement had been made between Mr. Adams and me—after the actual termination of an election, the issue of which was brought about, according to Gen. Jackson, by the basest of means, he was unwilling to accept the honours of a public dinner, lest it should imply even an *exception* against the result of the election.

General Jackson professes in his letter of the 6th of June—I

quote again his words, "to have always intended, should Mr. Clay come out over his own signature, and deny having any knowledge of the communication made by his friends to my friends and to me, that I would give him the name of the gentleman through whom that communication came." He pretends never to have seen the Fayetteville letter, and yet the pretext of a denial under *my signature* is precisely that which had been urged by the principal editors who sustain his cause. If this be an unconcerted, it is nevertheless a most wonderful coincidence. The General never communicated to me his professed intention, but left me in entire ignorance of his generous purpose; like the overture itself, it was profoundly concealed from me. There was an authorized denial from me, which went the circle of the public prints, immediately after the arrival at Washington of the Fayetteville letter. In that denial my words are given. They were contained in a letter dated at Washington City on the 18th day of April last, and are correctly stated to have been "that the statement that his (my) friends had made such a proposition as the letter describes, to the friends of General Jackson was, as far as he knew or believed, utterly destitute of foundation; that he was unwilling to believe that General Jackson had made any such statement, but that no matter with whom it had originated, he was fully persuaded it was a gross fabrication, of the same calumnious character with the Kremer story, put forth for the double purpose of injuring his public character and propping the cause of General Jackson, and that for himself and for his friends, he *defied* the substantiation of the charge before any fair tribunal whatever." Such were my own words transmitted in the form of a letter from a friend to a *known* person. Whereas the charge which they repelled was contained in a letter written by a person then unknown to some person also unknown. Did I not deny the charge under my own signature in my card of the 31st January, 1825, published in the National Intelligencer? Was not there a substantial denial of it in my letter to Judge Brooke, dated the 28th of the same month? In my circular to my Constituents? In my Lewisburg Speech? And may I not add, in the whole tenor of my public life and conduct? If General Jackson had offered to furnish me the name of a member of Congress who was capable of advising his acceptance of a base and corrupt proposition, ought I to have resorted to his infamous and discredited witness?

It has been a thousand times asserted and repeated, that I violated instructions which I ought to have obeyed. I deny the charge; and I am happy to have this opportunity of denying it in the presence of my assembled Constituents. The General Assembly requested the Kentucky delegation to vote in a particular way. A majority of that delegation, including myself, voted in opposition to that request. The legislature did not intend to give an *imperative* instruction. The distinction between a request and an instruction was familiar to the legislature; and their rolls attest that the former is always addressed to the members of the House of Representatives, and the latter only to the Senators of the United States.

But I do not rely exclusively on this recognized distinction. I dispute, at once, the right of the legislature to issue a mandatory instruction to the Representatives of the people. Such a right has no foundation in the Constitution, in the reason or nature of things, nor in the usage of the Kentucky Legislature. Its exercise would be a manitest usurpation. The General Assembly has the incontrovertible right to express its opinion, and to proclaim its wishes, on any political subject whatever; and to such an expression great deference and respect are due; but it is not obligatory. The people, when, in August, 1824, they elected members to the General Assembly, did not invest them with any power to regulate or control the exercise of the discretion of the Kentucky Delegation in the Congress of the United States. I put it to the candour of every elector present, if he intended to part with his own right, or anticipated the exertion of any such power by the legislature, when he gave his vote in August, 1824.

The only instruction which I received from a legitimate source, emanated from a respectable portion of my immediate constituents; and that directed me to exercise my own discretion, regardless of the will of the legislature. You subsequently ratified my vote by unequivocal demonstrations, repeatedly given of your affectionate attachment and your unshaken confidence. You ratified it two years ago by the election of my personal and political friend (Judge Clarke) to succeed me in the House of Representatives, who had himself subscribed the only legitimate instruction which I received. You ratify it by the presence and the approbation of this vast and respectable assemblage.

I rejoice again and again, that the contest has at length assumed its present practical form. Heretofore, malignant whispers, and dark surmises, have been clandestinely circulated, or openly or unblushingly uttered, by irresponsible agents. They were borne upon the winds, and, like them, were invisible and intangible. No responsible man stood forward to sustain them, with his acknowledged authority. They have at last a local habitation and a name. General Jackson has now thrown off the mask, and comes confessedly forth from behind his concealed batteries, publicly to accuse and convict me. We stand confronted before the American people. Pronouncing the charges as I again do, destitute of all foundation, and gross aspersions, whether clandestinely or openly issued from the halls of the Capitol, the saloons of the Hermitage, or by press, by pen, or by tongue; and safely resting upon my conscious integrity, I demand the witness, and await the event with fearless confidence.

The issue is fairly joined. The imputed offence does not comprehend a single friend, but the collective body of my friends in Congress; and it accuses them of offering, and me with sanctioning, corrupt *propositions*, derogating from honour, and in violation of the most sacred of duties. The charge has been made after two years deliberation. General Jackson has voluntarily taken his position, and without provocation. In voting against him as President of the United States, I gave him no just cause of offence. I

exercised no more than my indisputable privilege, as, on a subsequent occasion, of which I have never complained, he exercised his in voting against me as Secretary of State. Had I voted for him, I must have gone counter to every fixed principle of my public life. I believed him incompetent, and his election fraught with danger. At this early period of the Republic, keeping steady in view the dangers which had overturned every other Free State, I believed it to be essential to the lasting preservation of our liberties, that a man, devoid of civil talents, and offering no recommendation but one founded on military service, should not be selected to administer the Government. I believe so yet; and I shall consider the days of the Commonwealth numbered, when an opposite principle is established. I believed, and still believe, that now, when our institutions are in comparative infancy, is the time to establish the great principle, that military qualification alone is not a sufficient title to the Presidency. If we start right, we may run a long race of liberty, happiness, and glory. If we stumble in setting out, we shall fall as others have fallen before us, and fall without even a claim to the regrets or sympathies of mankind.

I have never done General Jackson, knowingly, any injustice. I have taken pleasure, on every proper occasion, to bestow on him merited praise for the glorious issue of the battle of New Orleans. No American citizen enjoyed higher satisfaction than I did with the event. I heard it for the first time on the Boulevards of Paris; and I eagerly perused the details of the action, with the anxious hope that I should find that the gallant militia of my own state had avenged, on the banks of the Mississippi, the blood which they had so freely spilt on the disastrous field of Raisin. That hope was not then gratified; and although I had the mortification to read the official statement, that they had ingloriously fled, I was nevertheless thankful for the success of the arms of my country, and felt grateful to him who had most contributed to the ever memorable victory. This concession is not now made for the purpose of conciliating the favour, or mitigating the wrath, of General Jackson. He has erected an impassable barrier between us, and I would scorn to accept any favour at his hands. I thank my God that He has endowed me with a soul incapable of apprehensions from the anger of any being but himself.

I have, as your representative, freely examined, and in my deliberate judgment, justly condemned, the conduct of General Jackson in some of our Indian wars. I believed, and yet believe him, to have trampled upon the Constitution of his country, and to have violated the principles of humanity. Entertaining these opinions, I did not, and could not, vote for him.

I owe you, my friends and fellow citizens, many apologies for this long interruption of the festivities of the day. I hope that my desire to vindicate their honoured object, and to satisfy you that he is not altogether unworthy of them, will be deemed sufficient.

LEMr'20

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 011 895 365 4